



STUDYING ABROAD: IN CASE YOU FEEL CULTURE SHOCK

Some students find a great deal of difficulties in adjusting to study in a foreign country. Here are some tips to ease the transition:

- Acknowledge the inevitable stress from change and losses. Allow time for rest, reflection and taking care of you physically and psychologically.
- Implement stress management techniques, such as progressive muscle relaxation, deep breathing, meditation, or aerobic exercise.
- Learn to challenge your cognitive distortions, such as: unrealistic expectation, "all or nothing" thinking, overgeneralization ("stereotyping"), "negative filter," (seeing the glass half empty instead of half full), and "mind reading" ("they all hate me").
- Increase your knowledge about the host culture. Knowledge helps dispel paranoia and increases your sense of efficacy, as well as feelings of familiarity and comfort. You can learn more about your host culture through:
 - making a list of questions to guide your search for information
 - reading about the culture before you leave home and bringing some materials with you
 - talking with host nationals
 - talking with other foreign students and compatriots about what they have learned
- Find a host national who is sympathetic and understanding and talk with that person about specific situations and your *feelings* related to the situations. Try to see the culture through his/her eyes.
- Consciously and actively look for logical reasons behind the aspects of the culture that seem strange, confusing, difficult or threatening. Look for patterns and interrelationships. Seek understanding.
- Resist making jokes or disparaging comments about the host culture and don't hang around with people who do.
- Seek professional help to address depression, excessive anxiety and to provide a supportive ear.

- Set up a routine similar to the one at home.
- Keep a journal.
- Link up through the worldwide web to the [UM Counseling Center's self-help page](#)
- Have faith in yourself and in your hosts. Remind yourself that you have the skills to learn and grown from this experience.

Adapted from “Survival Kit for Overseas Living”, by Robert Kohls and
from the University of Missouri-St. Louis Counseling Center